

Potato varieties: fact sheet

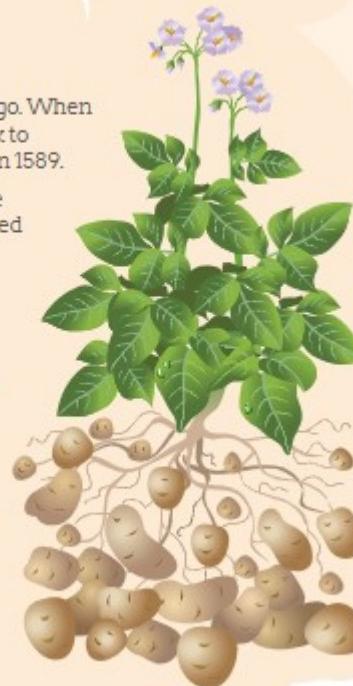
Potato varieties

There are over 4,000 edible types or 'varieties' of potato and they are many different colours, shapes and sizes! Potatoes can have white, brown, purple or red skin and white or gold flesh.



A brief history

- ▶ Potatoes were first discovered in Peru, more than 6,000 years ago. When the Spanish conquered Peru in 1536, they brought potatoes back to Europe, and Sir Walter Raleigh introduced potatoes to Ireland in 1589.
- ▶ In the 1840s an outbreak of 'potato blight' destroyed most of the potato crop across Europe. In Ireland, almost 1 million people died from starvation or disease due to the famine.
- ▶ The King Edward is one of the oldest surviving varieties. It was introduced at the time of the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902.
- ▶ Potato production doubled during WWII when food shortages meant we had to grow more for ourselves. Potatoes replaced many ingredients in wartime recipes. Potato Pete was a cartoon character used to promote potatoes.
- ▶ Potatoes have remained a staple part of British diets, and in 1995 potatoes were taken on board the space shuttle Columbia and became the first food ever to be grown in space.
- ▶ Today, around 300m tonnes of potatoes are grown worldwide.



British varieties

Around 80% of all the potatoes we eat are 'home grown'. Approximately 100 different varieties are grown in Great Britain, but only 20 or so are widely available in the shops. The varieties that you see may depend on the region or the season. Potatoes are often referred to as 'new' (harvested in early summer) and 'old' (harvested in autumn). The average person in Britain eats around 500 'spuds' a year.

New varieties

Specialist potato breeders work to create new varieties, with better qualities: For example:

- Increased resistance to pests and diseases
- Better storage qualities
- Greater nutritional value
- Increased 'yield' (the number of potatoes produced on a piece of land)

- Better eating quality and appearance
- Reduced needs for inputs such as water and fertiliser

Know your potatoes

Although every variety is different, potatoes can be divided into three groups or types.



Characteristics		
Before cooking	Before cooking	Before cooking
Before cooking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bright, granular with a drier feel When cooked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluffy in the middle, soft dry texture 	Before cooking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bright, granular with a drier feel When cooked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smooth texture. Hold shape when boiled or cooked in a sauce such as Dauphinoise, a hot pot or soup 	Before cooking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transluscent, firm, moist, pasty When cooked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold their shape well. Firm to the bite
Preparation and Cooking		
Perfect for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roasting, baking and chipping 	Perfect for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mashing, boiling or wedges 	Perfect for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boiling, steaming, roasting and salads
Popular varieties		
King Edward, Maris Piper	Desiree	Charlotte, Maris Peer
Other varieties		
Arra Victory, Cara, Dunbar, Rover, Fianna, Golden Wonder, Highland Burgundy, Innovator, Kerr's Pink, Mayan Gold, Red Duke of York, Red King Edward, Rooster, Sante, Shetland Black, Violetta, Yukon Gold	Accord, Apache, Chopin, Dunford, Estima, Harmony, Lady Balfour, Marabel, Marfna, Maris Bard, Melody, Mozart, Nadine, Vivaldi	Annabelle, Anya, Bambino, Carlingford, Corolle, Duke of York, Exquisa, Galante, Inca Dawn, Jazzy, Kestrel, Pink Fir Apple, Nicola, Pentland Javelin, Baby Gem

The science behind the cooking

Although every variety is different, potatoes can be divided into three groups or types. Varieties: fact sheet www.cookyourownpotatoes.org.uk Potatoes vary from having a smooth to a fluffy texture when they are cooked. The different textures are due to changes that happen to potato cells during cooking.

During cooking the starch in the potato begins to absorb water and swells in size. The starch cells of new potatoes are younger and stronger which means they hold their shape well.